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MONTANA INDIAN RESERVATIONS

WELCOME

Montana's Indian reservations are rich strongholds of Native American heritage. They are places where Indian culture can be experienced in sacred landscapes and at annual gatherings—where traditional dress is worn and rituals are performed as they have been for hundreds of years. Remarkable art and crafts reflect a unique connection between Montana Indians and the natural world.

There are seven reservations in Montana, representing eleven tribes. Each features a wealth of cultural institutions such as the Museum of the Plains Indian in Browning, the Plenty Coups Memorial Museum in Pryor, St. Labre Indian School at Ashland, and the Fort Peck Assiniboine and Sioux Culture Center and Museum in Poplar.

Special events on each reservation provide insight into traditional Indian culture. The Crow Fair Powwow, Rodeo and Race Meet is the largest Indian celebration in Montana. Other events in the state include the Standing Arrow Powwow held on the west shore of Flathead Lake, the Fort Belknap Mid-Winter Fair at the Fort Belknap Agency and Rocky Boy's Annual Powwow.

Historic sites abound on all seven reservations. At the National Bison Range, on the Flathead Reservation, buffalo roam a 20,000-acre national wildlife refuge. The Little Bighorn Battlefield National Monument, on the Crow Reservation, and Chief Two Moons Memorial, at Busby on the Northern Cheyenne Reservation commemorate the Indian victory over Custer's Seventh Calvary.

Traditional dress can be seen at Indian powwows, fairs and festivals throughout Montana

DONNIE SEXTON

While Montana's Indians have worked to adapt to the changing world around them, they have kept the rich culture and traditions of their past. This heritage contributes immeasurably to the cultural flavor of Montana.

VISITING A RESERVATION

The reservations have special social and cultural events and activities. Tribal powwows, hand games, shinny games and rodeos are social events usually open to the public. When visiting these events and public places such as museums, churches, and tribal facilities, it is important that guests show respect and courtesy.

Most cultural and religious ceremonies require special permission to attend or, in some cases, may not allow visitors at all. In some tribes a host family will extend a personal invitation to visitors and inform them of the correct protocol. All the tribes hold their religion and traditions in high regard. Sacred sites must not be defiled; artifacts are not to be removed or distributed. There are places where mementos can be purchased on all reservations.

Powwows are social gatherings featuring generations-old drumming and dancing, and traditional dress and food. Visitors are welcome at powwows. Participants should bring lawn chairs or blankets, since seating is limited at most powwows. Guests may dance during the "Round Dance" (everyone dances in a circle) or when invited by the emcee. It should always be kept in mind that the dance area is sacred. Visitors may also participate by invitation in a "Giveaway," a sharing of accomplishment or good fortune.

All events and points of interest in this brochure are open to the public. When unsure if guests are allowed at other events or places on Montana Indian reservations, visitors should contact tribal offices.

Flash photography is not allowed during contests, and it is polite to ask dancers and singers before taking pictures.

Cultural and recreational activities may also be enjoyed outside of community events. However, visitors should be aware of tribal management practices that exist to protect the environment and wildlife. Tribal offices must be contacted for regulations concerning access and recreation.

A HISTORY OF MONTANA'S NATIVE AMERICANS

The history of the various modern tribes in the part of America we now call "Montana," is characterized by movement within seasonal cycles for many of them. They traversed the plains to follow the bison and then retreated in intertribal struggles for control of hunting territory. Finally, with the bison nearly extinct and tribes decimated by battles with white men and disease, there came the final move onto reservations, marking the end of an era.

Archeological evidence shows that Native Americans inhabited Montana more than 14,000 years ago. Artifacts indicate the Kootenai have roots in the area's prehistory. The Kootenai inhabited the mountainous terrain west of the divide, venturing only seasonally to the east for buffalo hunts. The Salish, the Pend d' Oreilles and the Crow were probably among the first "modern" Indians to join the Kootenai in Montana. The Salish and the Pend d' Oreilles occupied territory as far east as the Bighorn Mountains. During the 1700s these three tribes shared common hunting and gathering grounds. With the signing of the Hellgate Treaty, their massive landholdings were ceded and the tribes now share the fertile ground of the Flathead Reservation.

DATES RESERVATIONS WERE ESTABLISHED
(with main community and resident tribes)

Blackfeet (Browning)	1851	Blackfeet
Crow (Crow Agency)	1851	Crow
Flathead (Pablo)	1855	Salish, Kootenai & Pend d'Oreilles
Fort Belknap (Fort Belknap Agency & Harlem)	1888	Assiniboine & Gros Ventre
Fort Peck (Poplar)	1888	Assiniboine & Sioux
Northern Cheyenne (Lame Deer)	1884	Northern Cheyenne
Rocky Boy's (Box Elder)	1916	Chippewa-Cree

The Chippewa and Cree were the latest tribal groups to come to Montana. They came from reservations outside the state late in the nineteenth century after Montana's reservation system was in existence. These tribes today are intermixed and use the hybrid name, "Chippewa-Cree," and claim the windswept Rocky Boy's Reservation in the north.

Tepee villages no longer dot the plains but individual tepees still offer a striking visual image of Indian culture

DONNIE SEXTON

The majority of Montana's Indians arrived after 1700. By the time most Indians came to this area, white men's culture was already strongly felt. The horses introduced to Indians by Spaniards in the Southwest, and guns from white frontiersmen, became deciding factors in determining which tribes would dominate the Montana territory in a culture completely dependent upon the bison.

The bison-based economy deteriorated in the 1880s when several factors affected the future of Montana's Indians. Bison were hunted to near extinction, the Canadian and United States governments became the dominant force driving Indians from their lands, and white men's diseases diminished the population and faded the spirit of the Native Americans. By the 1870s large tracts of land, through various treaties and executive orders, were formally reserved for Indian people. Thus the reservations evolved.

Today nine percent of the Montana land base is reservations. Not all of this land is still owned by native people, but all is governed by tribal or federal law. Reservations are important, not only because Native Americans have strong spiritual ties to the land, but because reservations have become the Indians' last retreat and the last chance to preserve their culture. Now, the people of Montana's reservations are working to build strong economic bases so that their culture will survive and flourish for future generations.

BLACKFEET

THE PEOPLE

The reservation is home to the Blackfeet tribe. Of the approximately 14,750 enrolled tribal members, there are about 7,000 living on or near the reservation. Nearly 27 percent of enrolled members are of three-fourths or greater Indian blood.

Spectacular scenery is part of the appeal of visiting Montana's Indian reservations

The Blackfeet Indians are commonly thought to have acquired their name because of the characteristic black color of their moccasins, painted or darkened with ashes.

LOCATION

The Blackfeet Reservation is in northwestern Montana along the eastern slopes of the Rocky Mountains. Its one-and-a-half million acres are bordered on the north by Canada and on the west by Glacier National Park.

ECONOMY

A manufacturing plant on the reservation produces pencils, pens and markers. Major uses of the land are ranching and farming. The principle crops are wheat, barley and hay.

There are eight major lakes and 175 miles of fishing streams. Tribal permits are required and guides are available through Fish, Wildlife & Parks. The tribe operates four campgrounds.

POINTS OF INTEREST

Museum of the Plains Indian, U.S. 89
Browning, MT 406-338-2230
The museum exhibits the creative achievements of North American artists and craftspeople. A permanent exhibit displays artifacts of the Northern Plains Indians and two special galleries feature changing presentations. The museum also houses a gift shop.

Blackfeet Community College
Browning, MT 406-338-5441
Two-year associate's degrees are offered in the Arts and Sciences. Major expansion is underway.

Blackfeet Historic Site Tour 800-215-2395
The historic site tours are half- and full-day tours of the reservation and Head Smashed In Buffalo Jump. The tour begins at the Museum of the Plains Indian.

For more information about the
Blackfeet Reservation, contact:
Blackfeet Nation, P.O. Box 850
Browning, MT 59417 406-338-7276

CROW

THE PEOPLE

About 75 percent of the Crow tribe's approximately 9,300 enrolled members live on or near the reservation. Eighty-five percent speak Crow as their first language.

This tribe was called "Apsaalooké," which means "children of the large-beaked bird." White men later misinterpreted the word as "crow."

Chief Plenty Coups was the last recognized chief of the Crow. He left his land and home as a park for all people.

LOCATION

The Crow Reservation is in southcentral Montana, bordered by Wyoming on the south with its northwestern boundary about 10 miles from Billings.

ECONOMY

For many years the vast coal deposits under the eastern portion of the reservation remained untapped. One mine is now in operation and providing royalty income and employment to tribal members. The Crow operate only a small portion of their irrigated or dry farm acreage and about 30 percent of their grazing land. They maintain a buffalo herd of 300 head.

POINTS OF INTEREST

Bighorn Canyon National Recreation Area and Yellowtail Dam, Fort Smith, MT 406-666-2412
The canyon features spectacular scenery, wildlife viewing, boating, fishing and camping. There are two visitors centers—one at Fort Smith and one at Yellowtail Dam.

Little Bighorn Battlefield National Monument/ Reno-Benteen Battlefield, Crow Agency, MT 406-638-2621 These monuments commemorate the Indian victory over the Seventh Cavalry. The Little Bighorn Battlefield National Monument features museum exhibits, an interpretive center and ranger-led programs.

Chief Plenty Coups State Park
Pryor, MT 406-252-1289
This is the home of the well-known Crow Chief, Plenty Coups. There is a display of Crow artifacts and a scenic picnic area.

Little Big Horn College
Crow Agency, MT 406-638-7211
The college is home to the Institute for MicroBusiness Development and offers associate's degrees in eight areas. Tours and lecture referrals are available.

For more information about the
Crow Reservation, contact:
Crow Reservation, Crow Agency,
MT 59022 406-638-2601

FLATHEAD

THE PEOPLE

The Flathead Indian Reservation is home to the Confederated Salish and Kootenai tribes. The tribes are a combination of the Salish, the Pend d'Oreilles and the Kootenai. Of the approximately 6,800 enrolled tribal members, about 3,700 live on or near the reservation.

LOCATION

North of I-90 between Missoula and Kalispell, fertile valleys and towering mountain peaks of northwestern Montana surround the Flathead Reservation. The reservation comprises over 1.2 million acres.

ECONOMY

The principle sources of income for the tribes are derived from its timber industry sales and from revenues paid to the tribes through the co-license for the Kerr Dam facility with Montana Power Company. The tribes also own a full-service Best Western resort hotel in Polson named Kwataqnuk (which means "where the water leaves the lake") and an electronics manufacturing facility, S&K Electronics, Inc.

POINTS OF INTEREST

Flathead Indian Museum
St. Ignatius, MT 406-745-2951
Native American crafts and artifacts are featured. They manufacture local native products.

Flathead Lake State Park, 406-752-5501
Flathead is the largest freshwater lake in the West. Points of interest on the lake include Wild Horse Island (Kwíkunk'mi in the Kootenai language) and six other scenic state units (five on the reservation): Finley Point, Elmo, Yellow Bay, Big Arm, Wayfarers and West Shore. Except for Wild Horse Island, all units offer camping, fishing, boating and swimming.

Recreational rafting tours operate on both Flathead Lake and the Flathead River below Kerr Dam.

The National Bison Range/Pablo National Wildlife Refuge, Moiese, MT 406-644-2211
Approximately 500 readily visible bison roam nearly 20,000 acres of natural grassland. Visitors are also likely to see elk, bighorn sheep, antelope and deer on self-guided auto tours, year-round.

Ninepipe National Wildlife Refuge and State Wildlife Management Area, Ronan, MT 406-644-2211
This area is one of Montana's designated Wildlife Viewing sites. It is an exceptional wetland complex, prime for birdwatching.

St. Ignatius Mission
St. Ignatius, MT 406-745-2768
Established in 1854, the mission was built by Native Americans under the direction of Catholic missionaries. There are 58 original murals by Brother Joseph Carignano on its walls and ceiling. The Mission Range of mountains provides a striking backdrop for the mission.

Salish-Kootenai Community College
Pablo, MT 406-675-4800
Tours of campus are available. The college offers two and four-year degrees.

The People's Center on the Flathead Indian Reservation is but one of many Indian museums and cultural attractions in Montana.

Sqélix" Aq‡emakni-k Cultural Center
"The People's Center," Pablo, MT 406-675-0160
"The People's Center" features an exhibit gallery, "Native EdVentures" tours, a learning center offering educational programs and a quality gift shop featuring the works of local Indian artisans. Admission. Open daily 9am–7pm.

For more information about the
Flathead Reservation, contact:
Confederated Salish & Kootenai Tribes,
P.O. Box 278, Pablo, MT 59855 406-675-2700

FORT BELKNAP

THE PEOPLE

The Fort Belknap Reservation is home to two tribes, the Assiniboine and the Gros Ventre, with a combined enrollment of about 4,000.

LOCATION

The combined reservation and additional tribal lands encompass 650,000 acres of the plains and grasslands of northcentral Montana.

ECONOMY

The Bureau of Indian Affairs and the tribe are the major employers. The reservation is working to develop tourism and a market for handcrafted Native American arts and crafts. The tribes manage a 300-head buffalo herd. Antelope, bird and gopher hunts are available; licenses and guides required.

POINTS OF INTEREST

Fort Belknap Community College
Fort Belknap Agency, MT 406-353-2607
Two-year associate's degrees in the Arts and Sciences are offered, along with one-year certificates. The Tribal Archives are located on campus, along with a student-built library.

Bison are making a comeback on many of Montana's Indian reservations

Fort Belknap Tourism Office and Information Center, Harlem, MT 406-353-2205
The Information Center also houses Fort Belknap Ventures, which features handcrafted Native American arts and crafts. RV parking, showers and picnic grounds are available. Staff provide tours of the Mission, Snake Butte, ancient tepee rings and the tribal buffalo pasture.

Mission Canyon/Natural Bridge, South of Hays
This scenic recreational canyon has picnic and camping areas. The Natural Bridge, Wilson Park, Devil's Kitchen, Needle Eye, and Kid Curry's Hideout are some of the most popular attractions.

Saint Paul's Mission Church, Hays, MT 406-353-2205
The mission was established in 1887 by the Bureau of Catholic Missions. Today, it serves as a kindergarten-through-eighth grade school.

For more information about the
Fort Belknap Reservation, contact:
Fort Belknap Tourism Office, R.R. 1, Box 66,
Fort Belknap Agency, Harlem, MT 59526
406-353-2205

FORT PECK

THE PEOPLE

About 6,800 Assiniboine and Sioux live on the Fort Peck Reservation with another approximately 3,900 tribal members living off the reservation.

LOCATION

The Fort Peck Reservation is in northeastern Montana, 40 miles west of the North Dakota border, and 50 miles south of the Canadian border, with the Missouri River defining its southern perimeter. It includes more than two million acres of land.

ECONOMY

A prosperous industrial park in Poplar is one of the largest employers in Montana. A variety of enterprises, including metal fabrication and production sewing are housed here. Other industries, including an electronics manufacturer, flourish on the reservation. Farming, ranching and oil extraction also play a part in the reservation economy.

POINTS OF INTEREST

Fort Peck Assiniboine and Sioux Culture Center and Museum, Poplar, MT 406-768-5155
The Culture Center and Museum features permanent exhibits of Assiniboine and Sioux heritage, arts and crafts.

Fort Peck Community College, Poplar, MT
406-768-5551
The college offers associate's degrees in the Arts and Sciences, along with one-year certificates. There is a tribal law library on campus, and a cultural center is planned.

For more information about the
Fort Peck Reservation, contact:
Fort Peck Assiniboine and Sioux Tribes,
P.O. Box 1027, Poplar, MT 59255 406-768-5155

NORTHERN CHEYENNE

THE PEOPLE

Approximately 5,000 Northern Cheyenne, along with members of other tribes, live on the reservation.

LOCATION

The rugged country of the Northern Cheyenne Reservation is in southeastern Montana. It covers 445,000 acres and is bounded on the east by the Tongue River and on the west by the Crow Reservation.

ECONOMY

Major employers include the St. Labre Indian School, the federal government, tribal government, power companies and construction companies. The education system, farming, ranching and small businesses contribute to the economy.

POINTS OF INTEREST

Chief Two Moons Monument, Busby, MT
This historic monument was built in 1936 in memory of Chief Two Moons, who participated in the Battle of the Little Bighorn.

Dull Knife Memorial College
Lame Deer, MT 406-477-6215
Associate's degrees in the Arts and Sciences are offered, along with vocational programs. The John Woodenlegs Memorial Library is a part of the college. Food service, library and gift shops are open to the public.

St. Labre Indian School
Ashland, MT 406-784-2200
This school was established in 1884 by the Franciscan Order. The visitors center, museum and gallery are important showplaces of Cheyenne heritage and art.

For more information about the
Northern Cheyenne Reservation, contact:
Northern Cheyenne Chamber of Commerce,
P.O. Box 991, Lame Deer, MT 59043
406-477-8844 or 406-477-6284

ROCKY BOY'S

THE PEOPLE

Rocky Boy's provides a home for about 2,500 members of the Chippewa-Cree tribe.

The name "Rocky Boy" was derived from the name of a leader of a band of Chippewa Indians. It actually meant "Stone Child," but it was not translated correctly from Chippewa into English, and "Rocky Boy" evolved.

LOCATION

Rocky Boy's Reservation is near the Canadian border, in northcentral Montana. It is graced by the Bears Paw Mountains, which provide a dramatic contrast to the flat bottomlands of this area.

ECONOMY

Rocky Boy's residents who work on the reservation are employed by the schools, Bureau of Indian Affairs, Indian Health Service and tribal government. There is also some wheat farming and post and pole production. The tribe is actively working toward development of its natural resources to be able to provide more jobs and income for its people.

POINTS OF INTEREST

Stone Child College,
Rocky Boy's Agency, MT 406-395-4269
A two-year college, Stone Child offers associate's degrees in the Arts and Sciences. There are future plans for a cultural center on campus.

For more information about the
Rocky Boy's Reservation, contact:
The Chippewa-Cree Business Committee,
Box 544, Rocky Boy Route, Box Elder, MT 59521
406-395-4282

Horses have played a central role in the culture and history of the Indians of the Northern Great Plains

Montana State Library
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As the first Americans, we (Indian People) created the first tourism bureaus. We love this beautiful earth, in all its mystique and we are honored to share it with others. We have been playing good hosts for the past 500 years, a way of life grounded in the generosity of the Indian spirit. A spirit that can still be experienced when you visit our homelands.

Henri Mann, Ph.D.

For general information on Montana's Indian reservations, contact

Office of Indian Affairs
Room 202, State Capitol
Helena, MT 59620
406-444-3702

For a vacation planning packet, call:

Travel Montana
406-444-2654
800-VISIT-MT or 800-847-4868
(out-of-state)
Internet address: http://travel.mt.gov/

PLEASE NOTE:
The information in this guide may have changed since its publication. Verify all information before travel. Every effort has been made to include a representative selection of events and points of interest. Visitors should contact the reservations to find out about more recreational and educational opportunities.

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CALENDAR OF EVENTS

Contact each reservation headquarters for Information

JANUARY

First weekend
New Year's Powwow, Lame Deer, MT
406-477-6284 (Northern Cheyenne Reservation)

FEBRUARY

First weekend
Fort Belknap Mid-Winter Fair, Fort Belknap, MT
406-353-2205 (Fort Belknap Reservation)

APRIL

First week
Fort Belknap Education Conference and Powwow, Fort Belknap Agency and Hays, MT
406-353-2205 (Fort Belknap Reservation)

Ceremonial singing and drumming are very much alive on Montana's Indian reservations

MAY

Third weekend
Buffalo Feast and Powwow, St. Ignatius, MT
406-675-2700 (Flathead Reservation)

Memorial Day weekend
Northern Cheyenne Powwow and Rodeo, Lame Deer, MT 406-477-6284 (Northern Cheyenne Reservation)

Date TBA
Head Start Mini Powwow, Pablo, MT
406-675-2700 (Flathead Reservation)

JUNE

Third weekend
Red Bottom Celebration, Frazer, MT
406-768-5155 (Fort Peck Reservation)

Fourth weekend
Badlands Celebration, Brockton, MT
406-768-5155 (Fort Peck Reservation)

JULY

First weekend
Hays Community Powwow, Hays, MT
406-353-2205 (Fort Belknap Reservation)

Independence Day week
Arlee Fourth of July Celebration, Arlee, MT
406-675-2700 (Flathead Reservation)

Independence Day weekend
Fort Kipp Celebration, Fort Kipp, MT
406-768-5155 (Fort Peck Reservation)

Northern Cheyenne Powwow, Lame Deer, MT
406-477-6284 (Northern Cheyenne Reservation)

Powwow and Celebration, Lodge Grass, MT
406-638-2601 (Crow Reservation)

Second week
North American Indian Days,
Blackfeet Tribal Fairgrounds, Browning, MT
406-338-7276 (Blackfeet Reservation)

Second weekend
Wild Horse Stampede, Wolf Point, MT
406-768-5155 (Fort Peck Reservation)

Third weekend
Hays Community Fair and Rodeo, Hays, MT
406-353-2205 (Fort Belknap Reservation)

Iron Ring Celebration, Poplar, MT
406-768-5155 (Fort Peck Reservation)

Standing Arrow Powwow, Elmo, MT
406-675-2700 (Flathead Reservation)

Fourth weekend
Milk River Indian Days,
Fort Belknap Powwow Grounds, Fort Belknap, MT
406-353-2205 (Fort Belknap Reservation)

AUGUST

First weekend
Rocky Boy's Annual Powwow, Rocky Boy's Agency, MT
406-395-4282 (Rocky Boy's Reservation)

Wadopana Celebration, Wolf Point, MT
406-653-3476 (Fort Peck Reservation)

Third week
Crow Fair Powwow and Rodeo, Crow Agency, MT
406-638-2601 (Crow Reservation)

Fourth weekend
Oil Discovery Celebration, Poplar, MT
406-768-5155 (Fort Peck Reservation)

SEPTEMBER

First weekend
Poplar Indian Days Celebration, Poplar, MT
406-768-5155 (Fort Peck Reservation)

Labor Day weekend
Ashland Labor Day Powwow, Ashland, MT
406-477-6284 (Northern Cheyenne Reservation)

Fourth week
Native American Week, Box Elder, MT
406-365-4478 (Rocky Boy's Reservation)

OCTOBER

Third weekend
War Dance Championships, St. Ignatius, MT
406-675-2700 (Flathead Reservation)

DECEMBER

Fourth weekend
Christmas Powwow, Busby, MT
406-477-6284 (Northern Cheyenne Reservation)

Christmas Powwow, Hays, MT
406-353-2205 (Fort Belknap Reservation)

This map provides general information only. It is not accurate in miles or in geographic distances. Consult the Montana Official Highway Map before travel for accurate information.